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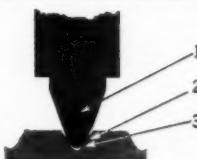


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The American RECORD GUIDE

January 1948 ▲ Vol. XIV, No. 5

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Editorial Notes

Records 1947

Last February in our summary of recorded
highlights for the year 1946, we mentioned
the many letters deplored the commercialism
in the record industry. This past year
our mail bag yielded further disapproval of
this condition.

It is evident that the protestants fail to
realize that competition, essential to "big
business" make for commercialism. The rec-
ord industry, which deals actually in an art
product, is motivated primarily by entertain-
ment rather than cultural values. That the
majority of the masses listen to the radio and
purchase records for entertainment and not in pursuit of self-elevation is a statistical
fact. It is futile and unfair to reprehend the
record industry, since it is not a free agent but
actually an accessory to the musical
scene in America — and generally speaking
in most countries. We had occasion to ob-
serve the identical situation in a study of
recording conditions in France and Italy.

Entertainment varies with different per-
sons inclusive of those who arrange and pro-
ffer music. This past year has seen the pro-
duction of many albums with the most in-
congruous and unrelated titles. The intent
was to intrigue the purchaser with material
conglomerate and disparate yielding the most
inconsistent type of diversion. Considerable
indignation has been expressed against this.

The latest trend in the industry is the
exploitation of modern so-called "high fidelity"
recording over musical values. As aurally
gratifying as this more realistic type of
reproduction proves to those who possess
equipment to do it justice, one nonetheless
rues the fact that it has become a more com-
pelling factor with many than true artistic
and musical appreciation. We applaud a

worthy advance in a hard-driven industry, but let us not lose sight of its finest artistic values.

The perplexed and often discouraged musical listener of today will be interested in a letter recently received from a Detroit school teacher. He writes: "Once upon a time in my more naive days, I used to think that the humanism contained in the 'humanities' would save the world, that beauty — synonymous with goodness and merit — found in a great work of art would automatically transform the evil in man. Alas, however, too many people — especially those in authority — look upon great art as a diversion or as a pleasant background to their more worldly interests. Yet, like you in your worthy esthetic endeavors, I shall continue to missionize the spirit of beauty and goodness. A single bloom in a garden of weeds can be recognized and one's appreciation is deepened by its bloom."

Records 1947

The record output of domestic recordings in the year 1947 was enormous and the reviewer who heard the bulk of the releases faced an arduous task. In making our annual selection of the highlights of the year, we have been governed by the reactions of the reviewing staff. Omissions of other favorably considered releases does not necessarily mean we have altered our opinions. Space does not permit a rediscussion of everything. We have not included any society releases since these are not available to the general public. The quality of performance and recording in all cases remains satisfactory, with the exceptions noted.

January 1947

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 4*. Beecham and the London Phil. Orch. Victor set 1081. Good recording but not extended range. MIASKOVSKY: *Symphony No. 21*. Rachlin and USSR Natl. Sym. Compass set C103. A fine work and better than most Russian recordings. MOZART: *Jupiter Symphony*. Toscanini and NBC Sym. Orch. Victor set 1080. Our preferred performance of this work, excellently recorded. PROKOFIEFF: *Fifth Symphony*. Rodzinski and the Phil.-Sym. Orch. Columbia set 661. Preferred performance. STRAVINSKY:

Petroushka. Ansermet and London Phil. Orch. Decca set EDA 2. Brilliant recording of a first-rate performance. MOZART: *Arias*. Pinza, Walter and Metropolitan Op. Orch. Columbia set 643. Recommended for the singer's renditions of arias from *Nozze di Figaro*, *Il Seraglio* and *Mentre ti lascio, o figlia*.

February 1947

BEETHOVEN: *Pastoral Symphony*. Walther and the Phila. Orch. Columbia set 631. A most appreciable performance and recording. STRAVINSKY: *Fire Bird Suite*. Stravinsky and Phil.-Sym. Orch. Columbia set 635. Our preferred version of this ballet music. HAYDN: *Quartet in G minor (Horseman)*. Budapest Quartet. Columbia set MX-274. The best version of this work on records. BACH: *Arias*. Marion Anderson, Shaw and RCA Chamber Orch. Victor set 1087. The singer at her best, excellently recorded.

March 1947

FALLA: *El Amor Brujo*. Stokowski, Merriman and Hollywood Bowl Sym. Orch. Victor set 1089. This performance withstands the keen competition of the Reiner-Brice version for reproductive quality and the more stylistic singing of the soloist. WAGNER: *Die Meistersinger — Vorspiel*. Toscanini and NBC Sym. Orch. Victor disc 11-9385. The consistent pleasure we have had from this disc is one we hope all readers have shared. SHOSTAKOVICH: *Trio, Op. 67*. The composer, etc. Compass set C102. One of Shostakovich's best works, well played and satisfactorily recorded. HANDEL: *The Messiah*. The highlight of the month.

April 1947

BACH: *Christ lag in Todesbunden*. Shaw and RCA Victor Chorale. Victor set 1096. Not a completely satisfying interpretation but the beauty of the music recommends it. BRITTON: *Serenade for Tenor, Horn and Strings*. Peter Pears, Dennis Brain and Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca EDA 7. The highlight of the month. Ingenious musical settings enhanced by the cultural artistry of the singer.

(Continued on page 143)



Mahler from an etching by Arthur Paunzen

G U S T A V M A H L E R

By Neville Cardus

The eminent English critic, Neville Cardus, needs no introduction to our readers. In March 1947, we were privileged to present an article by him on Johannes Brahms. The present article on Mahler, like the Brahms, comes from his book, Ten Composers (published in England in 1945 by Jonathan Cape). It is republished by arrangement with the author and his publisher. Associated during the war with the Australian Broadcasting Commission, Mr. Cardus has in recent months returned to his former post as music critic on the Manchester Guardian.

Gustav Mahler (1860-1911) was an Austrian and a Jew, who became converted to Catholicism. He composed ten symphonies of large dimension, and also he was one of the great conductors of music's history. He wrote not a note that recalls the harsh patriarchal accents of Hebraism; there is no incense in his work; on the contrary, he worships nature and mankind more than he worships the Church of the Blessed Virgin.

He was born tragically. The gods lavished gifts on him which blossomed in many directions; they gave him imagination and intellect; they gave him the passion of de-

votion and emulation; also they gave him the Jew's restless self-consciousness and egotism; the priest and the artist in him were made kin with the actor, for conducting, after all, is a form of acting. His boyhood was shadowed by cruelty; his father and mother hated each other and jealously fed on his love; his brothers and sisters were doomed to suicide, madness or deceit. He lived for a while on his mother and she on him; then his daemon awoke and he was driven into the greater world to independence ruthless and savage. At the age of thirty-eight he was dictator of music of Cen-

tral Europe in the Imperial Opera of Vienna at the full noon of its splendour. His pursuit of truth and beauty was fanatical, and in the end the world broke him. With a character and temperament woven from rare and sensitive strands into a bodeful twisted texture, he was at variance with himself from the beginning. To-day he stands as a typical figure of romanticism; he was also the first of the examples of pathological creative genius; and he was the symbol of the frustration of the Jew in music. He was a great man, both in himself and because of the way he was used by the Time-Spirit. He deserves patient study, aesthetic and psychological.

II

We run into entanglements of his mind and art at the first glance of a score of Mahler. The material of the music is often familiar and simple; the organization of it, the technique of form and transition, is original and complex. Melodies from the Bohemian countryside are recollected against a background of medieval demon-lore; the child in Mahler is always running to his mother's apron to hide. In the Fourth symphony, where paradise is seen as a place of gilt and gingerbreads, a vision passes of death sitting with his tuneless fiddle on a gravestone. Cuckoo-calls, bugle-calls from barracks at dawn; the march of the gay noisy bands of Vienna; an ancient chorale or an echo from his beloved masters, Beethoven, Bruckner, Schubert — all these remembered strains and cadences are changed to sophisticated inflections and texture. Folk-song in wood-wind is answered by the romantic rhetoric of horn and brass. Into a tone-world of Styrian landscape and old village comes the languishing and over-civilized string portamento of the city and concert-house, dripping with *Zaertlichkeit*. The trombones perform audacities of chromatic scales; and the tympani is an arsenal. 'Naive, you say, without pausing to consider whether a Jew can ever be naive. But look further into this music; take the whole of a Mahler symphony in a survey from beginning to end. Elaboration and extension could not easily go beyond Mahler's; he freed symphonic logic and syntax from many traditional inhibitions; he extended the movements, and made fantasies of development-sections; he bred the-

matic material like pond-life; he transformed symphonic melody into the arabesque of improvisation; he clarified the symphonic harmony, for Mahler's orchestra was not made numerous for sonority's sake; he needed many instruments because he aimed at and achieved characteristic colour, the intimate line. He, in fact, was orchestrally the link between romantic orchestral harmony and the linear instrumentation of the present-day. In the technique of symphonic organization Brahms was the naive composer, compared with Mahler. Yet at bottom, in his thematic stuff, and also in the conceptions underlying his music, Mahler remained for long the Mahler who wrote the 'Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen', the composer who heard the wonder-horn of youth in his ears, until the great seas of his age's romanticism lured him from the land.

He once described himself as Strauss's antithesis. There is some truth in it; Strauss had all the invention and Mahler had all the aspiration. In the decline and fall of Strauss there was irony: in the noble reach that exceeded the grasp of Mahler, as he sang in his own song, was lost in the world: 'Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen'. Throughout his music, even in the Christmas-card view of a peasant's heaven depicted in the Fourth symphony, a refrain from this song can be heard. It was the Mahler *leit-motif*, his essential cadence; and it came to a dying-fall and end in 'Das Lied von der Erde'.

He was at one and the same time egoist and Everyman. He wrote the first auto-biographical symphonies; but he wrote, too, the Eighth symphony, dedicated to humanity. There he saw as in a vision a universal music which would praise heaven and earth with a thousand voices and instruments, the fields and the birds of the air, and the smallest of earth's creatures, and men and women and children. Not the stern ethical millennium of Beethoven did Mahler wish to proclaim, but the world of here and now, made sweeter with love of brother and brother, of sister and sister, of father and son, of mother and child. There is no love expressed in Mahler except love of kind . . . Everyman's love. In his ten symphonies we can follow the journey of the man's soul and its struggles. The first four of them show us the emergence from youth to maturity; the echoes of Mahler's home and countryside can

still be heard as he plunges into the greater world and lives through the *Sturm und Drang* which in those days was the aesthetic fashion shaping the artist's life. The Mahler symphonies are a close sequence, and not until the Tenth can you see how the wheel of the man comes full circle. In the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh symphonies Mahler composed without using words or the human voice, his only wordless and unvocal music since the First symphony. He was now at the height of his career as musician and master of the orchestra, and the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh of his symphonies are the first fruits of his orchestral culture.

The Eighth symphony, the 'Symphony of a Thousand', reveals Mahler placing his art, now that he is technically a master, at the service of all people. 'Mir heisst Symphonie', was his credo, 'mit allen Mitteln der vorhandenen Technik, mir eine Welt aufbauen.' He would bequeath his inheritance to the world. The Eighth symphony is Everyman's symphony. It embraces, in intention at any rate, earth and heaven; the music speaks not of the individual but of the universal soul. The enormous choir and orchestra are as the Time-and-Space dimension; and fresh young angels, of the blessed children born into the loftier ether. Eight soloists share the burden, like so many Atlases, of supporting Mahler's universe of song and tone.

Then, after the Eighth symphony, a complete reaction, an escape from the rejoicing multitude, to loneliness. Mahler could not himself enter the world of Everyman. In the Eighth symphony the apotheosis proclaims, to the words of Goethe, the fulfilment of all things. Here is the unrealizable:

Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist es getan.

But not for Mahler the brotherhood of heaven on earth. He was not of the masses; and he was still at war with himself as man and artist. He turns away in his next work, his masterpiece, from all that he has been heading for, from the vision he saw of a music which would be now a dream, now a drama, now a song of nature, now a song of man, now a dance and now a sermon. He was always a wanderer in the world. Not as a master of magnitude in music could he find his soul; he could not return again to mere music; not again as the revealing priest

in a truly Catholic cathedral of tone could he speak. These experiences an artist can go through but once, and if he then finds not what he seeks he must look elsewhere. He saved himself and achieved his masterpiece, not in the symphony of his own ego; not in the symphony of Everyman; not even in the symphony of remembered youth; and not in the *réclame* of opera and concert. He wrote freely and happily and beautifully out of a soul at peace at last, out of an imagination at one with itself and fully realized, when he went into the hills and absorbed a philosophy and poetry of ancient China, expressing acquiescence, fortified by wine and fancy, and nature's loneliness that gently falls over the Ego like a cloak.

I cannot think of Mahler as a man who just sat down and composed symphonies and offered them for our delectation simply as music. With each of his works he lived through a necessary stage in his spiritual development. Music was his only way of life. He had to shed many skins. He needed to create music to fulfil his destiny, as a woman needs children at the risk of producing masterpieces or not masterpieces.

'So closely bound up is the act of creation in me with all my experience that when my mind and spirit are at rest I can compose nothing.' Also he said, 'When I conceive a composition I always arrive at the point where I must employ the word as the bearer of my musical idea'. It is important, at once, to realize exactly what the 'word' meant for Mahler; it is the crudest error to infer that he ever wrote programme-music; this fact had best be understood before our studies in Mahler proceed further. He never separated the vocal from the instrumental style in his imagination. The use of the human voice and words in Mahler no more sunders him from the symphonic style than the use of words sunders Beethoven from it in the Ninth. There are, as I say, refrains and cadences in all the Mahler symphonies of songs he heard or composed in youth or in early manhood; they follow him even into the harder and more bony world of his instrumental symphonies, the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh. But as soon as a melody of vocal origin enters Mahler's mind it is, if I may use the word, symphonized: it loses its independence as song and becomes a theme, a motif, a germ of an instrumental texture.

Sometimes, he seems not to have taken the trouble to invent his symphonic material. And we arrive now at the celebrated problem of his banality, his *Banalitaet*.

III

Romain Rolland has written cynically of Mahler's 'assimilations', of 'Beethoven taking lessons from Mendelssohn; Chabrier giving Bach a helping hand'. This is superficial, a classic example of 'Banalitaet' in musical criticism. For Mahler is one of the most personal of composers; his music, even when it recalls other music, is stamped unmistakably with his own style, his own way of feeling. His shallowest detractors contradict themselves; they dismiss him as a conductor who composed from memory helped out by a conductor's technique of instrumentation, and then they admit that they are repelled by the Mahler *Stimmung*, the Mahler temperament. I can not only *feel* Mahler in nearly every bar he wrote; I can see him. His music seems to project the essence of him, a sort of ectoplasm. Maybe the spirit which emanates is not always Mahler's; maybe it is sometimes Schubert's, or Bruckner's or Liszt's; the fact is that Mahler is the medium. I am not concerned here with likes or dislikes; I am pointing out that whether you love or detest Mahler, he exists. The trouble is that much has been written or said of Mahler by people who do not know his music; they have heard only the so-called banalities, those parts of his speech belonging to the common musical vocabulary of his period. I can imagine that Bach in *his* day was accused of banality; I mean that his melody and harmony were much in the air; he made an inherited stock of material his own by drawing it through the sieve of his mind.

Mahler lived all his days in music; for music he burnt himself out at an early age. Of the great composers — and make no mistake, he is great — he is the only one who conceived, thought and experienced mainly in symphonic terms; he wrote no opera, though he was the greatest of all conductors of opera; and he wrote no piano or chamber music; even his song cycles are symphonically felt, at bottom. Into one form of music he poured his consciousness as man and artist; through one form of music he sought to untie the knot intricate of his being. Not

since Beethoven has a composer aimed at a larger and more truly symphonic ideal than Mahler's. And the essence of the symphony is the transition, the experience, the *dénouement* — not the birth and starting-point. I suspect that for Mahler the very elements of music, the language of it, often possessed a significance in themselves, enriched by association; he perhaps felt that invention was not his strong point. Often after he has got a new idea he is compelled to foster it and nourish it with all his instrumental sophistication and dexterity. In the Eighth symphony, when he hymning the song of all the children of God and nature, he is no more concerned with originality of theme than the priest devotedly performing a traditional ritual; the old hallowed modes and inflections serve well enough. He was apparently as little concerned with 'original' themes as Shakespeare with original plots. Through music he had to go his ways; all that he found on the journey, all that he inherited, he made his own by thought and intense feeling. In Mahler the style is not the idiom, the harmony, the structure; it is the man himself.

He composed, as I say, the first autobiographical symphonies. In Beethoven the hero is humanity seen in heroic mould; the Beethoven symphony is ethical and presents the struggle of idealism with destiny. There is no egoism in Beethoven. The Liszt and Berlioz symphonic-poem presented a romantic type — Byronic, presented objectively as Harold or Mazeppa or Faust. Brahms emulated the Beethoven ethic in his First symphony, then contented himself with music of reflective fancy or subjective feeling. The D major, F major, and E minor symphonies of Brahms are not really more symphonic than any of the first of Haydn's London set; I mean that they speak no ethic, no credo, certainly tell of no *Weltanschaung*. They are technically symphonies, no doubt; they are as a fact a superb adaptation of the old suite to a richer musical equipment. When we consider the symphonies of Brahms or Sibelius, for example, we do not feel that after the composition of any one of them, the composition of another marked an inevitable direction, even a crisis, in the life of either of these composers, as men, not only as artists. If the Third symphony of Brahms had followed the First,

none of us would have felt a sense of a gap or hiatus anywhere in Brahms's spiritual development. But Mahler could not possibly have conceived, let alone written, 'Das Lied von der Erde' earlier than the did write it; he had to seek it hard and patiently. Each of his symphonies was for Mahler a shedding of a skin; a renewal or renunciation. The finale of one symphony of Mahler presupposes the beginning of its successor. When the whole set of them was performed at Amsterdam twenty years ago, we could understand that here, if there was much that could not be regarded as great music, there was not an insignificant note; it was as though a noble and defeated man were being

self-portrayed before us; it was an incarnation of Mahler; the mental suffering stuff of him, the bones and perishable flesh had long since been flung into the earth. In these vast corridors of music his ghost walked still seeking, hearing now echoes of poignant beauty, now of long lost happiness, now of brave striding forging music, now of the whole heavens choiring to the bright-eyed cherubim; then suddenly sounded the chord of frustration, of the earth-bound, the dissonance that was all Mahler's experience crystallized into tone, even the banalities which made him, or should have made him, Everyman's composer.

(To be concluded next month)

EDISON AND THE DIAMOND DISC

By Angus Joss

Part II

When Edison returned from Europe in 1912, he was prepared to delve into the problems of marketing his new disc phonograph. At the June convention of jobbers there was on hand an instrument with records for demonstration. To outwit competitors, no effort was made to display the model. Instead, it was played in a concealed position for the entertainment of those present. The piano recordings sounded more realistic than any previously made. The piano incidentally was the only instrument that gave Edison any real trouble. It was freely admitted by the Edison concern that the later piano discs were more authentic. A demonstration was given the jobbers of the Diamond Disc machine which reproduced the tone colors so perfectly that each instrument could be identified as though the separate players were in the same room. Edison discovered that when two instruments were played simultaneously either on the same or different notes, the resulting effect was a con-

fusion of sounds rather than a blending. One listener expressed the opinion that the disc phonograph sounded to him like a man singing in a barrel. This was owing to the fact that the other discs of that time were strident and shrill in tone as compared to the Edison ones. Even the word "specie" was clearly audible on Edison's machine, a critical combination of sounds which had defied Edison for a year.

In the meantime, Edison had sent men to scour Europe for voices. This expedition lasted for three years with nearly 2,000 test recordings being made. These were later heard and commented upon by the inventor. Prominent singers and operatic artists of each city and town were represented. It might be interesting at this point to give some of the opinions of the inventor on the art of singing as he was an expert in judging voices by means of the phonograph which he regarded as the "acid test" of a voice. He claimed that the phonograph needed a voice of delicate timbre, a fresh and youthful

voice, scientifically perfect in the quality of its overtones. He believed that reputation was influenced by chance and opportunity to some extent but still more by a winning personality, fine stage appearance, histrionic ability and generally long experience in the art of dramatic acting and singing. All of the latter qualities counted for little or nothing on the phonograph; here the voice was tried on its merits alone. He claimed that some noted operatic singers were found to have intrinsically poor voices when they were recorded. Also great operatic artists were often actually under strain. The voice was continually taxed by a shouting delivery, made necessary for dramatic effect due to the set-up of the operatic stage. He did not decry operatic artists in general and many of them he found as near perfection as the human voice could be, but he preferred to record only those voices which had the necessary quality for the production of a good record, no matter what the artistic ability or the fame and experience of a singer might be.

Artists Unavailable

Edison faced a situation that was deplorable when he came to record commercial operatic selections because most of the familiar artists were under contract with other recording companies. He was forced to engage what remaining talent was then available, many of whom were discovered by his scouts throughout Europe and America. Some of these had natural recording voices as Edison discovered in his careful selection of the best records. Miller was a great recording technician but he lacked tact and patience in handling artists, with fact caused Edison to lose a number of his earlier talent, resulting in a large volume of trade going to competitors. To recapture this loss, he was urged to remunerate the artists more liberally but he declared that the fee was more than adequate. When we take into consideration the costly processes involved in manufacturing the Edison disc at the time perhaps he was correct in his decision. It is so easy to hold post-mortems now that the years have elapsed. However, higher fees may well have retained some worthwhile artists and accordingly stimulated his business, substantially.

Just before the Diamond Disc phonograph

and records made their public debut in January 1913, an event occurred which caused much anguish for Miller. In November 1912, Edison commenced releasing long lists of Blue Amberol, the perfected cylinder records, together with a suitable diamond reproducer and a new concealed horn model for those who did not care for attachments. Miller confided: "I thought I had talked him into abandoning the cylinder and he was slyly working at it all the time." What appeared to be folly to Miller was in reality just good business sense, not the usual characteristic of inventors. The cylinder was still in favor in some places, so Edison continued to issue it to the annoyance of Miller. No doubt the sale of these records and phonographs helped finance the successful launching of the disc. In 1913, records for the disc phonograph were few and limited in production since the method of Diamond Disc production technique was in its infancy. It was infinitely more complicated and slower to manufacture than the shellac disc. The latest hit tunes were not being produced as rapidly as those of his competitors. This fact was long a stumbling block in the progress of the Edison product. The company realizing this offered an attachment to play lateral-cut records on the new Edison machine. This was soon followed up by other manufacturers and in such quick succession that there were many Diamond Disc phonographs given over exclusively to lateral-cut records.

Unforeseen Damage

To add to the latter setback, thousands of Edison discs began to crack and warp and curl at the edges, making them unfit to be played except at the risk of damaging some part of the diamond reproducer. Many owners were dismayed at the damage the changing atmosphere did to their favorite records. Their complete chagrin was understandable when months later they learned that the records could not be replaced. Edison realized that completely new technique in the manufacture of his disc had to be devised, but a new difficulty arose while this was being worked out. The war broke out in Europe in 1914 and the chemicals needed for disc manufacture became scarce or impossible to acquire. Edison sprang into action, and within a month set up a plant to produce

phenol or carbolic acid to relieve the situation. Since other chemicals imported from Germany could no longer be had, substitutes had to be found to keep up production. The latter chemicals resulted in an inferior surface. Where the first discs had been reasonably quiet in surface noises, the newer ones hissed and scratched and popped. This detracted from the realism of quality in the opinion of many people.

Edison plunged into the work of effacing the difficulties and was making progress, when his plant was destroyed by fire that same year. Courageously he ordered it rebuilt and within a few months time the "insomnia squad" had records again on the market. Valuable masters, however, were lost and these could not be replaced as the singers were under contract to other companies. Despite difficulties, the records continued, but the surfaces were inferior to the pre-war product.

The First "Tone Test"

An event of prime importance took place in 1914 which must have lessened the inventor's anguish. Anna Case, an Edison artist, demonstrated in the first public "Tone Test," given before the jobbers at Des Moines, Iowa, that her voice heard in person matched her records. Although the jobbers long believed this test possible, they were further convinced of the realism of Edison discs by this remarkable demonstration. This first test led to a series of "Tone Tests" offered by jobbers and dealers in October 1915 at New York, Detroit, Cleveland, Philadelphia and Milwaukee. Over fifty artists cooperated in the tests subsequently carried on in all of the principal cities of the United States. All tests were made with a laboratory model because only that special phonograph could sustain the comparison, owing to its larger amplifying chamber. Newspapers printed comments which added to the testimony built-up during a period of eight years. Millions of people were convinced at the demonstrations that there was no difference between the recorded music and the performance by the living artist. In the "Tone Test," an artist sang or played in unison with the phonograph. At a random moment the artist stopped and the flood of music continued unabated. One could only tell when the artist ceased by

watching the hands or lips of the performer. Sometimes the lights were turned off and the artists stole away in the darkness. When the lights were turned on and the artist was no longer to be seen, the phonograph continued its realistic demonstration. This method of substantiation was varied sometimes by having the artist walk from the rear of the room down the aisle, singing in unison with the recording.

Claims of perfection had been previously advanced by at least two companies. In 1900, Columbia advertised that their records contained "music with all the charm as well as . . . power of the original — the voice living and real, with all its natural strength and beauty." Victor in 1908, advertised: "In the opera house corridor scene in 'The Pit' at Ye Liberty Theatre, Oakland, California, the famous quartet from Rigoletto was sung by Caruso, Abbot, Homer and Scotti on the Victor, and the delighted audience thought they were listening to the singers themselves. Every day at the Waldorf-Astoria, New York, the grand-opera stars sing, accompanied by the hotel orchestra of sixteen pieces. The diners listen with rapt attention, craning their necks to get a glimpse of the singer. Even in the Victor laboratory, employees often imagine they are listening to a singer making a record while they really hear the Victor."

The Test That Failed

Only one competitive phonograph dealer tried to duplicate the Edison "Tone Test." He was a Columbia dealer in Taylorville, Illinois, who on January 10, 1921 held a mock "Tone Test" with Ada Jones. It was a failure, which brought forth the challenge by the Edison Company "to any talking machine dealer to make a comparison, under proper test conditions, before a satisfactory committee, between a living artist's voice or instrumented performance and such talking machine's reproduction of the same artist's talking machine record. If the talking machine dealer will permit us to make a similar comparison, we will pay five hundred dollars to any local charitable organization selected by such committee if they decide that his talking machine sustained the celebrated Edison Tone-Test comparison as given by us; it is understood that the talking machine man is to pay five hundred dollars, if the

committee decides that his talking machine has not sustained the test". Needless to say, no talking machine dealer ever accepted the challenge.

Not many know about the manner in which Edison records were tested before release. All were first played before a committee which voted on whether they were up to the best standards and worthy of being issued. In the early days of the disc, Edison himself passed sole judgment on the recording, and if he found any fault he would not release the record. Often moulds were junked, necessitating another performance because the original did not attain the criterion demanded by "the old man", as he was affectionately called.

More Artists

As time went on, Edison acquired a larger number of artists. Some of these were noted singers who had recorded for other companies. Their advent added to the prestige of the Diamond Disc. Sales climbed in spite of the rough surfaces. In June 1918, Edison announced a new "velvet surface" record which was a great improvement. It involved more chemical experiments, but by the 1920s there was a smoother, warp-proof record. The production was stepped up considerably in the matter of releasing Broadway hits. The white label record appeared in 1921. This was a splendid improvement not only in the appearance of the record but in making titles easier to read. The old black record, with its etched titles, had to be held to the light to read the name of the artist and the selection. Many of the objections to the Diamond Disc had been abolished, and "Tone Tests" and "Turn Table" tests helped push the sales. In the "Turn Table" tests, the leading talking machines of the day were pitted against the Edison. A needle record by an artist could be compared to the artist's Edison record while listeners sat in front of the turntable as it revolved on different machines each in turn playing the record. Even the needle record sounded much better on the Edison with its larger, scientifically designed horn. The Brunswick phonograph was a strong competitor as it was equipped to play Edison records with its Ultona reproducer minus a mechanical feed. Although the reproduction was good the Edison records wore out much

faster on the latter machine. The Edison Company missed their chance when they did not take the Brunswick concern into court to prove that Edison records could not be played on the Brunswick machine without damage.

* * *

By early 1924, the radio began to compete strongly with the phonograph. Sales on records and phonographs began rapidly to subside. People were intensely intrigued by the new sound producing gadget which supplied the hit tunes with news flashes, stock and weather reports, speeches of celebrities and historical events. The commercials had not yet become so frequent or so boresome, hence the reproduced music of radio gained popularity. The fact that mainly living artists were performing swayed public interest from records toward the radio. There were some phonograph records played on the smaller stations but the commercial transcription had not made its appearance.

The record manufacturers, hard hit by radio, struck back with electric recording in 1925. Machines were put on the market with increased volume, greater range and more realistic quality. Edison seemed to ignore this new trend, probably because the acoustical qualities of the new records were not of superiority to his own. A deep, bombastic bass was the new attraction of the lateral-cut records put out by the few companies that remained in the field. Their machines were improved with metal alloy diaphragms and at first were equipped with the exponential horn—a folded six-foot tone chamber which required a larger cabinet to house it. Not long afterwards, the electrically amplified machines replaced these and the phonograph and radio combination came into being. This instrument became increasingly popular much later.

In 1926, Edison desperately began to fight the radio. He devised a forty-minute and a twenty-minute record. This was accomplished by recording at 450 grooves to the inch. Attachments for the latest models were made so that they could play the latest innovation. Sixty per cent of the diamonds were destroyed in grinding them to fit the diminutive track of the long-playing record. This latter was placed on the market in 1927, but was not as popular because Edison was five years too late with his innovation. The

fine threads were easily stripped since they were delicate and could not stand wear. In addition to this, there was lessened volume of sound, a very definite drawback. The public could not seem to learn, or were unwilling to learn, to change reproducers and shift gears. It was the old two and four minute cylinder trouble all over again.

Meanwhile, the radio voice grew stronger with the advent of the dynamic speaker, so Edison manufactured a new standard reproducer in 1928, and a new model "Edison" with more volume. A special loud reproducer was designed to produce greater volume on the dance discs. In 1929, an electric recording with still louder volume and an electric combination with a universal pickup—to play vertical as well as lateral-cut records—arrived. In an attempt to recapture some of the record business, Edison also released for a few short months a lateral-cut disc. Every new effort, however, seemed all in vain. Record sales continued to drop.

The quality of Edison lateral-cut electric discs was superior to those of other companies. They were more natural in sound and did not have the rasping characteristic that electricity caused in voice reproduction, especially in the earlier days. Despite the exaggerated bass on band and orchestral records in other brands, it should be noted they possessed more realistic qualities particularly in the matter of overtones. Unquestionably, recording was simplified by the use of microphones in place of acoustic horns, yet to many phonophiles the electric recorded voice discs were a disappointment since their only improvement was a louder and fuller accompaniment.

Record sales had reached the bottom in 1929. Undoubtedly the realization of this fact caused the Edison management to announce the abandonment of Diamond Discs records as of November 1st of that year. Sentiment was being dethroned for business reasons. I have often wondered what Edison thought of his favorite invention being junked for the radio. It must have been with mingled feelings of regret and despair that he gave his consent. He did make the prophecy that the phonograph would have its comeback, and we have lived to see his prophecy fulfilled in a remarkable manner. In the future, it is to be hoped that people will not forget the man who wished to be re-

membered as the inventor of the phonograph and the record. They were undeniably his pet brain-children and the work he did to perfect them deserves to be remembered.

Records 1947

(Continued from page 133)

May 1947

MENDELSSOHN: *Reformation Symphony*. Beecham and London Phil. Orch. Victor set 1104. A welcome addition to the recorded symphony repertoire. Good reproduction. DELIUS: *Violin Concerto*. Sammons, Sargent and Liverpool Phil. Orch. Columbia set 672. Delius at his romantic best in music of poetic serenity, beautifully played and well recorded. MOZART: *Piano Quartet No. 2*. Szell and members of the Budapest Quartet. Columbia set 669. Good performance and recording. SCHUBERT: *Quartet in E flat*. Quiet String Quartet. Concert Hall set AE. A splendid performance and fine recording.

June 1947

BARTOK: *Piano Concerto No. 3*. Sándor, Ormandy and the Phila. Orch. Columbia set 674. BARTOK: *Violin Concerto*. Menuhin, Dorati and Dallas Sym. Orch. Victor set 1120. Both sets are well played and recorded. BIZET: *Carmen*—*Habanera*, and MASSÉ: *Paul et Virginie*—*Air de tigre*; Jeanne Gerville-Réache. Victor Heritage disc 15-1008. One of the greatest contraltos of all times heard at her best. Her rendition of the *Carmen* air is the finest on records.

July 1947

HANDEL: *Concerti Grossi*. The Busch Chamber Players. Columbia set 685. An important contribution to the recorded literature of Handel. If not of the consistently fine playing to be found in Busch's unexcelled Bach *Brandenburg Concerti* sets, the performances are nonetheless enjoyable. Recording quality will be aided by cutting down on the high control. RAVEL: *Chants Hébraïques* and *Chansons Magécauses*. Madeleine Gray, Ravel and Ensemble. Vox set 186. Despite inferior recording, this set is recommended for the fine artistry of Miss

Grey and the unusual appeal of the music. DUKAS: *Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Jorda and Natl. Sym. Orch. Decca set EDA 16. This is the most thrillingly imaginable performance of this work on an extended range set, but on the average commercial outfit its superiority over the previously preferred performance of Gaubert (Columbia set MX-75) may not be fully apprehended.

August 1947

RAVEL: *Daphnis and Chloe* — Suites 1 and 2. Münch and Paris Conservatory Orch. Decca set EDA 29. Our preferred performances of this music. PURCELL: *Abdelazer Suite*. Fendler and Vox Cham. Orch. Vox set 199. Consistently enjoyable music, well performed and satisfactorily recorded. MOZART: *Adagio and Rondo, K. 617*. E. Power Biggs (celesta) and ensemble. Victor disc 11-9570. An inspired musical curiosity, originally for glass harmonica. A worthy composition for the much neglected celesta. BACH: *Twelve Little Preludes*. Erno Balogh (piano). Disc set 771. Mr. Balogh's playing of these little gems has given repeated listening pleasure. WOLF: *Five Songs*. Paul Matthen (bass-baritone). Hargail set HN 800. The singer's admirable artistry and the fact that this set contains three elsewhere unavailable songs by the composer recommends this release to every collector of *lieder*. SHAKESPEARE: *Henry V* — *Excerpts*. Laurence Olivier, Walton and Orch. Victor set 1128. Although the musical postion of this album is far too obtrusive, Olivier's extraordinary gifts as a Shakespearean actor recommend it.

September 1947

WAGNER: *Siegfried Idyll; A Faust Overture; Ride of the Valkyrie*. Toscanini and NBC Sym. Orch. Victor set 1135. The best performance of the *Siegfried Idyll* on records. The hard-driven *Ride* seems an unfitting companion for the other works. Excellent recording. BERLIOZ: *The Trojans — Royal Hunt and Storm and Trojan March*; BORODIN: *Prince Igor* — Overture. Beecham and London Phil. Orch. Victor set 1141. One should not miss the Berlioz. It is representative of the composer's most inspired music for the theater, and Beecham's performances are wholly admirable. BERLIOZ: *Roman Carnival Overture*. Victor de Sabata

and the London Phil. Orch. Decca disc K1552. BERLIOZ: *Beatrice and Benedict — Overture*. Sargent and Natl. Sym. Orch. Decca disc K1416. The *Roman Carnival* reveals the most admirable characteristics of de Sabata's conducting, and Sargent's straightforward treatment of the other overture is enhanced by the superior reproduction. DONIZETTI: *La Favorita — A tanto amor*. Victor Heritage disc 15-1010. The fabulous Battistini at his best, this is a recording all admirers of great singing should hear.

October 1947

HUMPERDINCK: *Hansel and Gretel*. Columbia set MOP-26. BACH: *Mass in B minor*. Victor sets 1145/46. Two important and enjoyable sets despite the fact that neither achieves full perfection in performance. BRITTON: *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*. Sargent and Liverpool Phil. Orch. Columbia set 703. A diabolically clever work, which provides a unique lesson in orchestration and at the same time sustains musical interest in repetition. TCHAIKOVSKY: *Fifth Symphony*. Kletzki and Philharmonia Orch. Columbia set 701. A most satisfying performance, excellently recorded. BEETHOVEN: *Violin Concerto*. Szegedi, Walter and Phil. Sym. Orch. Columbia set 697. Noble music, nobly played, and — in our estimation — splendidly recorded. MOZART: *Clarinet Quartet*. Kell and Philharmonia Quartet. Columbia set 702. MOZART: *Concerto No. 4 for Horn*. Dennis Brain and Hallé Orch. Columbia set 285. Both works are admirably played and recorded.

November 1947

BERLIOZ: *Romeo and Juliet Symphony — Excerpts*. Toscanini and NBC Sym. Orch. Victor set 1160. Were we asked to name the six best albums of the year, this one would head the list. For poetic subtlety in music, Berlioz surpassed himself in the *Love Scene*. MOZART: *Quintet in D major*. Budapest Quartet and Katims. Columbia set 708. A worthy performance of a great work, well recorded. OPERATIC DUETS. Jan Pearce and Leonard Warren. Victor set 1156. Fine singing and excellent recording.

(Continued on page 164)



RECORD NOTES AND

R E V I E W S

The past month has been both hectic and enervating. We have handled three times the number of subscriptions received in any similar period during the magazine's existence. To complicate matters, the weather took a sudden turn for the worse and we were virtually snowed in for a week, during which time no mail was received. The January records did not arrive until long after the first of the year while some December releases, said to be in transit, have not as yet been received. Owing to conditions beyond our control we were not able to deliver records to many reviewers. To add to our troubles, the power supply at the printer's was cut off for several days. Because of these conditions, we have had to hold up publication to a very late date. By next month we hope to be on schedule. —Ed.

Orchestra

BEETHOVEN: *Symphony No. 4 in B flat, Op. 60*; The Cleveland Orchestra, conducted by George Szell. Columbia set MM-705, four discs, price \$5.85.

▲Just a year ago, Victor issued Beecham's performance of this symphony. I noted at the time that the recording had an edge on the earlier Toscanini one. Considering recent advancements in recording technique it is not surprising to find that this set is reproductively better than Beecham's. The Cleveland Orchestra has always sounded extraordinarily well on records, and well it might be for Severance Hall in which the organization performs is one of the most acoustically perfect auditoriums in this country.

In connection with the Beecham set, I traced the history of this symphony on records. It was noted at the time that Columbia had an old set made by Weingartner more than a decade ago. Weingartner's performance reveals little imagination, and the two dimensional dynamic aspect of the reproduction leaves much to be desired. Columbia could not have chosen more wisely among its many accessible conductors for a new performance of this score. For Szell divulges a more appreciable perception of the music's content—one which is elated and humorous

in the quick movements and properly poised in the meditative adagio. He gives a performance equally as proficient as Toscanini or Beecham. I most certainly urge that those who possess the Weingartner version consider this one as a replacement.

Beethoven's *Fourth Symphony* reveals some of his most admirable qualities, among which might be cited his ability to alternate profundity and uninhibited elation. Those who do not know the work intimately are robbing themselves of a continuous source of pleasure. By its own virtue, it is quite as important as the composer's more famous *Eroica* and *Fifth Symphonies* which overshadow it.

—P.H.R.

BERLIOZ: *The Corsair—Overture, Op. 21*; The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor disc 11-9955, price \$1.00.

▲W. R. Anderson, writing in *The Gramophone* (January 1947), said of this release: "Berlioz-Beecham at their brilliant best. Need I say more? The recording shows how to get a keen fiddle-edge without throat-(ear-)cutting, how to convey the thought-behind-the-tune; how to weight a bass, shade a tune. . .many choice hints for the fit hearer." The late Sir Hamilton Harty once recorded this work, but in this new disc we hear subtleties of line and phrase which the older way of recording did not yield. This is a fine romantic piece, typical of its composer at his best. Tovey tells us that "Byron's Corsair is, of course, Byron himself, mythically wicked, sinister, and diabolically noble. Berlioz himself is a Brocken masquerading as Byron upon a cloudscape of abstract orchestration which is for him the one solid reality among the illusions. . .Gigantic as the Broken spectre is, Berlioz himself is greater than Byron. . .The Overture to *Le Corsair* is as salt a sea-piece as ever has been written". One should read Tovey in full. He stimulates one's appreciation. (See Vol VI of the *Essays in Musical Analysis*, page 50.)

—P.H.R.

HANSON: *Symphony No. 3 in A minor*; The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set 1170, price \$6.00.

▲This set arrived too late for review this month.

IBERT: *Escales*; The San Francisco Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Pierre Monteux. Victor set DV-10, two plastic discs, price \$5.00, or DM-1173, two shellac discs, price \$3.00.

▲The recording, heard in the plastic edition, was brilliant and lifelike with some highly impressive bass effects. The big bull-fiddles may cause some trouble on machines where no bass control cannot be lessened, especially in connection with a crystal pickup. Heard with the Audak Tuned Ribbon, the full basses were most realistic and imposing.

Ibert's *Escales*, or *Ports of Call*, is a sort of Mediterranean travelogue inspired by a cruise, and its three movements "are intended to invoke the sights and sounds experienced by the composer at Palermo, Tunis-Nefta, and Valencia". Each of the three pieces makes use of authentic melodic material heard during the voyage. This is impressionistic music somewhat flamboyant, orchestrated with great skill and tonal coloring. Rodzinski earlier recorded this work, (see July 1946 issue) but his performance was sadly routine—lacking in rhythmic buoyancy and tonal vividness. Monteux's interpretation is both spontaneous and vital—a far more telling and enjoyable experience. Not a great work, *Escales* demands vivacity and imagination to make its picturesque qualities realistic. There is the difference of day and night in Monteux's and Rodzinski's performances—the one is suffused with the colors and brilliance of high noon, the other obscured by murky shadows.

—P.H.R.

MAHLER: *Symphony No. 5 in C sharp minor*; The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Bruno Walter. Columbia set MM-718, eight discs, price \$10.85.

▲Mahler was one of the greatest conductors of his time. I have always believed that he, like Rachmaninoff, was a greater interpreter than a composer. He was regarded in his day as a modernist and the present symphony when first played was hissed by some because of its "offending modernism". Hard driven by a nervous intensity, which in the end exhausted his frail body, Mahler infected his music with this characteristic. It is present in this symphony. Dubbed "The Giant" by critics in 1904 because of its imposing length and structure this work is scored for

a large orchestra and in it the composer "employs all the resources which he had denied himself in the *Fourth Symphony*". As in all of Mahler's big works, there is nobility of thought and emotion mated to commonplace ideas—Mahler knew how to exploit an orchestra, but he often became enamored of excessive instrumentation. Although he professed no program in mind when he wrote this symphony, one writer, Dika Newlin, feels its "progressive tonality" is reflective of "Vienna's perpetual struggle between convention and revolt". The turbulence of this work is in direct contrast to the conservative *Fourth Symphony*. Why it begins with a Dead March—"with measured tread—like a funeral train"—is not explained. The opening is most impressive but the scoring is blatant and often harsh, the brasses are utilized with force and emphasis. The second section of the first movement, marked "With stormy emotion—with the utmost vehemence", is more impressive. The restlessness in Mahler that at times becomes almost hysterical is found in the Scherzo. Mahler was fully aware of its unusual energy, for he wrote his wife that this is "the very devil of a moment . . . Conductors for the next fifty years will all take it too fast and make nonsense of it; and the public—Oh, heavens, what are they to make of this chaos of which new worlds are forever engendered, only to crumble to ruin the minute after? What are they to say to this primeval music, this foaming, roaring, raging seas of sound?" The final Rondo, with its majestic ending is one of Mahler's most distinctive movements. The Adagietto, which precedes it, is said to have been inspired by Catholic mysticism, a faith to which Mahler was converted many years before. Its earnest poetic simplicity has long endeared it to many since it has been programmed as a solo movement in the concert hall and twice before recorded.

I am not equipped to express a detailed criticism of Walter's performance of this work since I am not too familiar with it. A friend as well as ardent adherent, Walter brings unmistakable evidence of his fervor and affection for the composer's music. Columbia has given the work brilliant and realistic reproduction. The monumental quality of the orchestration and the blatancy of the brasses may or may not make for difficulties on some machines. I found the

reproduction unbelievably lifelike and most impressive with its extended-range characteristics.

—P.H.R.

MOZART: Symphony in D major, K. 385 (Haffner) (5 sides); and **GLUCK: Orfeo—Dance of the Spirits** (1 side); The NBC Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Arturo Toscanini. Victor set DM-1172, price \$4.00.

▲ Those familiar with Toscanini's earlier recordings of these works may feel that the conductor has intensified his interpretations, but this is not true. Modern reproduction with its wider dynamic range gives the impression of greater intensification. Toscanini, as one English critic observed some years ago, "interprets Mozart in the strong way, so that not only is Mozart greater than ever, but more than ever does he seem, like Bach, to embody in himself all music". In his nuances, Toscanini has none of the affectation of many conductors. His is "an adjustment of delicately opposed sonorities", as the late Lawrence Gilman once said, rather than a sentimental or pretentious alteration. In the 19th century, it was the custom to interpret Mozart in a super-refined manner which refuted his musical virility. His art proceeded from actual life, and Toscanini plays it in a vibrant and living manner, which makes it seem contemporaneous with our time.

Of this symphony, recognized as one of Mozart's greatest, I should like to quote my late friend Sydney Grew, who once said: "The music represents the Mozart we can yield to, whatever our mood: the easy, gentle, altogether natural Mozart, full to the brim with the fancies, rock-founded on imagination, for whom to move in music is

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P.H.R.

RESPIGHI: *Roman Festivals—Symphonic Poem*; The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set MM-707, three discs, price 4.60.

▲As a pageant of orchestral coloring, this score offers a type of musical experience which can be most impressive, particularly when performed by a superb organization like the Philadelphia Orchestra and recorded as realistically as it is here. How much the music will appeal over a time remains questionable. The best section of the score is the October Excursions, in which the composer paints a rich-hued nature scene. The rest is comparable being thematically slim. The opening movement, a picture of the Circus Maximus in the old Roman days, is a bombastic portrayal of a Roman arena in which the martyrs are thrown to the lions. The second portrays a procession of holy pilgrims and their jubilation with the first sight of Rome, and the finale brilliantly but superficially depicts the festivities of the people on the eve of Epiphany.

Ormandy gives a splendid performance of this music. It is a conductor's score—giving ample opportunity to demonstrate all facets of the entire ensemble. As in the case of the recording of *The Pines of Rome* Ormandy fully rises to the occasion. Of the three works which form Respighi's Roman cycle, I think *The Fountains of Rome* with its poetic impressions and glittering and often exquisite orchestral shading has the most appeal. It is a work which bears repetition. In the other two tone poems, the composer became too pretentious and the thematic material he chose was far less consequential.

—P.H.R.

SHOSTAKOVICH: *Seventh Symphony (Leningrad)*; The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by William Steinberg. Musicraft set 83, eight discs, price \$10.

▲The reproduction is most impressive and the record surfaces are better than most I have heard from Musicraft. I would say that the conductors' earnestness and zeal suggest a sympathetic absorption with the score, and I feel certain that all who like this work will

value this performance. Moreover, the Buffalo Philharmonic is a competent organization and its debut on records is assuredly an auspicious one.

At the time that this symphony was written, Leningrad was under bombardment and the composer was living in bomb shelters and working with the fire-fighting brigade. Shostakovich was unquestionably emotionally stirred and it is not surprising that in this work he directly appealed to the emotions rather than the intellect of his listeners. The composer tells us that the first part of the work "tells of the happy, peaceful life of a people confident in themselves and their future". Then war comes. Of this part he states, "I made no attempt of naturalistic interpretation" but rather "I tried to give an emotion image of war". "The reprise is a memorial march," he claims, "or more correctly a requiem for the war victims. The requiem is followed by an even more tragic theme. I do not know how to describe it. Perhaps it is the tears of a mother, or even that feeling which comes when sorrow is so great that there are no more tears". The finale can be described in one word—"victory".

When this symphony was first introduced to American listeners it was accompanied by much Russian fanfare. It is regrettable that Shostakovich has been used for propaganda, since it has created conflicting reactions to the composer and his music. His gifts as a composer are immeasurable but his inspirations are more often impelled by emotions rather than intellect. This symphony is too long for its own good. It has its impressive moments—moments which any composer would be proud to claim, but lacks the maintenance of sustained inspiration. The work also is structurally weak and relies too much on an improvisational urge. The "memorial march" is stirring, one of the composer's best movements, but the rest too often flounders and leaves one with the feeling that Shostakovich was unable to rise above the emotions of the people and make of his music a more universal message of grim militarism.

—P.H.R.

SUPEÉ: *Light Cavalry Overture*; The Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 11-9954, price \$1.00.

▲ The recording is splendid, one of the best I have heard from the Boston "Pops", which is saying a great deal since this organization's recordings are inevitably of the best. Dealers and others will be using this disc to demonstrate the qualities of different phonographic equipment. Fiedler interprets this overture with conviction. It is a pleasure to hear an old and familiar work played in this manner, for not only do you hear the music at its best, but you have an insight into the way a fine performer discovers and reveals its particular qualities. From the beginning Fiedler dispensed for me the unpleasant recollections of blatant band and routine orchestral performances.

—P.H.R.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Nutcracker Suite, Op. 71a*; Andre Kostelenetz and his Orchestra. Columbia set MM-714, three discs, price \$4.00.

▲ An admirable recording revealing Kostelenetz's sense of orchestral balance. His treatment of this familiar work is crisp and incisive in the quick movements, perhaps a little lush in the sentimental ones but hardly a case of "gilding the lily". The romantic is inseparable from the music and if some stress it a bit more than others I am sure it would be with the composer's approval.

—P.G.

THOMAS: *Raymond—Overture*; The City of Birmingham Orchestra, conducted by George Weldon. Columbia disc 72374-D, price \$1.25.

▲ The recording is impressive for its quality especially in the softer passages. The fortissimi reveal considerable hall resonance. The music is tuneful and typical of its composer.

The opening half is the most appealing. The latter part borders on the commonplace. Thomas' *Raymond* was produced in Paris in 1851 where it failed. It gained a better foothold in Germany, but outside of the overture little music from this ill-fated score is known. To my knowledge the opera has never been produced in England or this country. Mr. Weldon handles the tranquil passages deftly, but his climaxes are on the stolid side. The recording has a rival in the Decca issue (disc K-1299), performed by Boyd Neel and the National Symphony, which I have never heard.

—P.H.R.

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WEBER: *Der Freischuetz—Overture, Op. 77;*

The Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia disc 12665. D. price \$1.25.

▲With the aid of a superior orchestra, Ormandy provides a formidable rival for Decca's recent performance by Leinsdorf and the London Philharmonic. The velvet richness of the Philadelphia strings and the polished luster of the horn section yield many movements which are most impressive. The performance is meticulously fashioned but lacking in the dramatic richness of the Toscanini reading. Ormandy's pacing of the overture, marked *Molto vivace*, is a shade slower than most conductors'. This results in less fervor in the final part and does not make of the clarinet solo (which comes midway in the overture) the magical movement that Toscanini produces. There is more drama in this work than Ormandy supplies, which leaves the impression that he might not be too familiar with the opera.

The recording is excellent. The opening side of my disc had an annoying swish which is hoped will not be found in all. —P.H.R.

WEBER: *Oberon—Overture;* The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor disc 11-9951, price \$1.00.

▲For sheer orchestral splendor and technical proficiency, this disc can be recommended, but personally I like my von Weber warmer-hued. Koussevitzky's interpretation does not reveal the understanding of the prevalent romanticism of the music's mood which is found in the Beecham version.

—P.H.R.

Concerto

BACH: *Concerto in A minor;* Roman Totenberg (violin) with the Musicraft Chamber Orchestra. Musicraft set 78, two discs, price, \$2.85.

▲It is ten years since Menuhin's performance of this fine concerto was issued. I have never understood why the *E major Concerto* is favored by both violinists and the public over the *A minor*. I cannot agree that the latter's expressive qualities are too austere.

To be sure, there is more of the joy of living in the *E major*, but there is equal appeal in the meditative beauty of the *A minor*.

Mr. Totenberg with a small string group, which he evidently directs himself, gives a most satisfying performance, despite a few tonal blemishes. It is the spirit of the playing that counts and I feel that both the violinist and the ensemble perform with a spontaneous and expressive musicality. In this presentation of the *A minor Concerto*, the aim was a reproduction of a performance of the music as played in Bach's time. I suspect that a harpsichord would have been included in Bach's day, but the smooth quality of the ensemble and the admirable recording suffers no loss without it. —J.N.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Concerto in D major, Op. 35;* Erica Morini (violin) with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Désiré Defauw. Victor set DM-1168, four discs, price \$5.00. (Manuel set, price \$6.00).

▲It has been said that the Brahms and the Beethoven violin concertos are works for a man, and that women usually bring a lot of feminine waywardness to them. The Tchaikovsky concerto cannot be classified as the exclusive property of men, it has its capricious qualities and much of its appeal lies in its melodic charm and sweetness which far too many masculine players treat with a gentleness that belies their sex. Miss Morini does not play this music in the suave manner of Milstein nor in the polished, cool-headed way of Heifetz. Hers is a more vital performance—a more earnest and incisive projection of the music. She does not permit the listener to relax in his seat, but makes him more actively conscious of both herself as a performer and Tchaikovsky as a composer. Hubermann played the work in much the same manner, but his technical exactitude was not on a par with Miss Morini. If there are rough moments on occasion, they can hardly be called blemishes for the spirit and vigor of her playing are the qualities of a finished artist who does not permit her technical prowess to dominate or alter her execution. As fine as are the performances of Heifetz and Milstein, the merits of this one are considerable and not the least of these is the interpretative intensity of the artist

which commands attention and interest. The long cut made in the finale may be traditional, but it is nonetheless disrupting to the form of the movement.

Mr. Defauw's orchestral direction is competent but hardly as inspired as the playing of the soloist. The recording is brilliant and sometimes too sharply etched, but its clarity of instrumentation is praiseworthy.—P.H.R.

Chamber Music

COUPERIN: *Second Suite in A minor*; and MARAIS: *Suite in D minor*; Alfred Zinghera (viola da gamba) and Putnam Aldrich (harpsichord). Technichord set T-9, five 10-inch discs.

▲ To those who admire early music played on the old instruments for which it was written, these records will be most welcome. There have been too few domestic issues of this kind since the esteemed series made by the American Society of Ancient Instruments released some years ago by Victor. Francois Couperin (1663-1733) and his contemporary, Marian Marais (1656-1728), were important musicians of their time. The music of the former is distinguished for its refinement of character and its graceful embellishments so typical of the Baroque style. He greatly influenced the development of early "form" through Bach. In Bach's suites there are many movements unquestionably modelled on the patterns used successfully by the Frenchman. Couperin's suites are grouped in varying order, the movements being fancifully entitled and "arranged in a half-theatric 'program'". Many of the titles he gave to a movement are enigmatic and whether completely descriptive or merely topical remains open to debate. Thus, in the present suite, we find the curious title of *Le Chemise blanche* which conjures all sorts of ideas.

Marais, a famous viola da gambaist, studied composition with Lully. Very little of his music has been recorded which makes the present suite especially welcome. The work contains a well devised set of variations on the old Portugese dance, *La Folia*, which Corelli also used in one of his most famous sonatas. Those receptive to music-making on old instruments, these divertingly contrived suites will appeal. There is nothing

exhilarating about this music, neither is the quality nor the character of the instruments, particularly the gamba, which effects a sound between that of a violin and a cello. Both artists are capable performers. Mr. Zinghera plays cello in the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Mr. Aldrich, a pupil of Landowska, has frequently been heard with that organization. The artists have formed a Society of Ancient Instruments which we hope will be represented by future recordings. The reproduction here is good, but the surfaces of the discs are not the smoothest. —P.H.R.

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BARBER: *Sonata for Violoncello and Piano, Op. 6*; Raya Garbousova and Erich Itor Kahn. Concert Hall Limited set No. 1, series B, two discs.

HINDEMITH: *String Quartet No. 4, Op. 32*; The Guilet String Quartet. Concert Hall Limited Edition set No. 2, series B, three discs.

SCHUBERT: *Sonata in C major, Op. Posth.*; Ray Lev. Concert Hall Limited Edition set No. 3, five discs.

▲ Barber's early predilections for the later German romantic school are recalled by his sonata. The work will appeal to most listeners since it is harmonically conventional and expressively written for both instruments. While no great emotional depth is revealed the capability of the composer's workmanship and his strict adherence to a stylistic formula is to be admired. Garbousova and Kahn perform with fervor and conviction. Excellent recording.

The performance of the Hindemith quartet cannot fail to delight chamber-music enthusiasts. It substantiates our earlier impressions that the Guilet Quartet is one of the finest ensembles now before the public. Moreover, the splendid recording of this work is a definite factor in the value of the set. This work was written in 1924 and belongs to Hindemith's so-called middle period. Those who know and admire his earlier *Opus 16 Quartet* will comprehend the style and purpose of the music. It is misleading to speak of this work as atonal. True, its consistent use of linear counterpoint and fluctuating tonalities, (except in the third movement) lend an atonal quality to the music but Hindemith is not a strict disciple of that school. The interest here is both intellectual and emotional. The opening movement with its fugal beginning and later intertwining linear writing has eye as well as ear appeal. Although one is tempted to say that the mind controls the heart in the slow movement, it nonetheless owns emotional appeal. The "Little March" which follows is harmonic in treatment, evidently designed as a brief respite. The final passacaglia, the most impressive movement, is the work of a master craftsman.

The Schubert sonata was an unfinished work. Its first two movements written in 1825 "are the only two pieces for pianoforte solo comparable with the same composer's

symphonic achievements," writes Arthur Hutchings in his book on Schubert, "and comparable (as music only, not as pianism) with Beethoven's keyboard masterpieces". Sketches for the scherzo and finale only were provided by Schubert, and in the present performance the work is given in its entirety with Ernst Krenek's completion of these movements. Krenek does not conceal the weakness of the composer's conception of the scherzo and finale and the laudibility of his musical efforts remains a moot question. Miss Lev is a capable pianist, but her performance of the symphonic first movement does not suggest to me that she concurs with Tovey that it is "perhaps the most subtle thing he [Schubert] ever wrote". Yers is a competent rather than penetrative reading of the work—applaudable for its forthright musicianship. Neither she nor Krenek convince me of the merit of the final movements and I see no reason for their performance. The recording is satisfactorily contrived. —P.H.R.

FRANCK: *Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano*; Zino Francescatti and Robert Casadesus. Columbia set MM-7171, four discs, price \$5.85.

▲ Not since the days of Thibaud and Cortot have we had a team better fitted to perform this sonata. As admirable as the performance by Yehudi and Hephzibah Menhuin was it lacked the essential elegance of style which these French musicians bring to the music. They reveal an unmistakable sensitivity for the music which Heifetz and Rubinstein in their set failed to convey. The latter team approached the work in a modern spirit, accelerating its tempi throughout in a manner which obscured the more poetic and alluring qualities of the music.

This is one of the most lyrically ingratiating of all works composed for violin and piano. Those who shun chamber music for one or another misconceived notions will find it instantly appealing, and they may well find themselves in a short time hurrying back to their favorite record shop to buy other chamber works.

The recording is well balanced on the whole, but sometimes the violin usurps the limelight. However, much of Casadesus' tonal nuancing is happily caught and conveyed in this recording and this is ideally matched by Francescatti's expressive violin playing.

I hope that these two esteemably compatible artists were able to record the two Fauré sonatas before the record ban. I have heard them play both and have recordings of their performances taken from the air which I highly value.

—P.H.R.

Keyboard

CHOPIN: *Etudes*, Opp. 10 and 25; Alexander Brailowsky (piano). Victor set DM-1171, price \$9.00.

▲ This set arrived too late for review this month. Mr. Schoberg will discuss it in the February issue.

RAMEAU: *Gavotte and Variations from the Suite in A minor*, La Poule, and COUPERIN: *Les Fastes de la grande et ancienne Menestrandise* and *La Tic-Toc-Choc*; Sylvia Marlowe (harpsichord). Musicraft set 84, three discs, price \$3.85.

▲ The reproduction is much better in this set than in Miss Marlowe's Scarlatti. There is less inflation of tonal sonority which adds considerably to one's enjoyment of the music. The elegance and refinement of the French school of harpsichord music does not advantageously withstand over-amplification, and Miss Marlowe's playing scarcely requires enlargement. There is a stylistic reticence in her performance of this music which substantiates best its elegance and charm rather than its élan. The program is well chosen and diverting. Rameau's *Gavotte and Variations* has a nobility of purpose and his characterization of the hen has humor. The long Couperin composition, *Festivities of the great and ancient Federation of Musicians*, is musical satire. The organization made attempts to secure legal control of all music teaching which Couperin opposed. The defeat of the Guild is the subject of this suite, which is often amusing but too lengthy. *Le Tic-Toc-Choc* is a deft imitation of a baroque clock.

—J.N.

SCHUMANN: *Kreisleriana*, Opus 16; Claudio Arrau (piano). Columbia set MM-716, five discs, price \$7.10.

▲ The late Fuller-Maitland considered the eight pieces which comprise this work to be "more thoroughly representative of the composer than any other, excepting perhaps the *Etudes symphoniques* and the great *Fantasia*". The title will be obscure to many today. It derives from a character which E. T. A. Hoffmann (1776-1822) conceived, an eccentric, impulsive, clever conductor called Kreisler. Hoffmann wrote mysterious and supernatural tales, and most of us are familiar with the fact that Offenbach's *Tales of Hoffmann* is based upon some of his yarns. Undeniably, Kreisler stimulated Schumann's romantic fantasy and the composer is said to have written the whole composition in a week in a frenzy of inspiration.

Mr. Arrau has long evinced a sympathy for Schumann's music. In 1939, he recorded the composer's *Carnaval Suite* for English Parlophone (a set which domestic Decca has



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recently released in this country). This performance was greatly admired by English critics and there are many musicians of my acquaintance who acclaim it the best rendition on records. The earlier sets by Rachmaninoff and Cortot did not boast the splendid recording of the Arrau which undeniably made for greater enjoyment of his artistry. Even today that recording stands up with the best and, in my estimation, serves the pianist much better than the present reproduction, which tends to be explosive on occasion. The quality of piano tone may or may not be due to a different instrument. One recording engineer of my acquaintance contends that some pianos record better than others.

Arrau seems happiest in rapid, brilliant passages of Schumann. This is proved in his rendition of the *Carnival Suite* and in his performance of the finale of the *Concerto*. The pianist does not convey the full intimacy of Schumann's poetic sentiment. There is a reticence to his playing in these passages with the result that the haunting melodic beauty of the second piece is not as arresting as it should be. Cortot in his performance of this work (Victor set 493) was more warmly impulsive if not as brilliant as Arrau. Some may rue that the latter's set is no longer available, but other will undoubtedly welcome Arrau's version which substantiates our belief that he is one of the most commanding pianists now before the public.

—P.H.R.

Instrumental

BACH: *Chaccone* from the *Partita in D minor* (for solo violin) (3 sides), and *Gavotte for Lute* (1 side); Andres Segovia (guitar). Musicraft set 85, price \$2.85.

One of my most memorial musical experiences was hearing Segovia in his first performance of this work in the concert hall, not only for the insuperable artistry and skill of the performer but the revelation of this music to the guitar.

▲The consistent tonal warmth and sensitivity of the instrument did not promote that frequent feeling of discomfort which the best of violinists produce. Schweitzer tells us that Bach's unaccompanied violin works

were intended to be performed with the old arched bow which permitted the "chords that the virtuosi of today can only play with difficulty and without any beauty of effect" to be rendered more smoothly and pleasantly as one unit. With the modern bow, Schweitzer states the "polyphonic arpeggio playing is and must be an impossibility". Having once heard this work played with the old arched bow I am in full agreement with Schweitzer. The closest approximation to that performance is the one Segovia gives on the guitar. He is unquestionably the greatest exponent of this instrument. His past repertoire of Bach and the early classics have long been praised and admired, and this—his greatest achievement in the field of music—deserves our highest respect and appreciation.

Musicraft has given Segovia the best recording he has ever had and the surfaces of the records are unobtrusive. I sincerely hope that all readers will make every effort to hear this set.

—P.H.R.

KREISLER: *Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasia*; Fritz Kreisler (violin) and the RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Donald Voorhees. Victor disc 11-9952, price \$1.00.

▲Kreisler wrote this work in 1941. He tells us that is "an expression of recollections of Viennese life—the gaiety of the people, reminiscences of boulevard cafes, the magic of Viennese nights and fond memories of his native city". This is facile, tuneful music—full of nostalgic sentiment. It is in the Kreisler tradition—salon music aimed to appeal to those who like lush melodies and that wistful tenderness of mood which the composer knows so well how to conjure. There is not all of the magic of the Kreisler violin playing of former times, but there is enough to sustain the interest of his faithful admirers. Mr. Voorhees does not "feel" the music in the manner of the violinist, but he provides a competent orchestral background. The recording is good.

—P.G.

Voice

BACH: *Cantata No. 140, Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*; sung by the RCA Victor Chorale with the RCA Victor Orchestra, direction of Robert Shaw. Soloists:

Suzanne Freil (soprano) Roy Russell (tenor) Paul Matthen (basso) Joseph Fuchs (violin) and Robert Bloom (oboe). Victor set M-1162, four ten-inch discs, price \$5.25; DM-1162, price \$4.20.

▲*Cantata no. 140*, though composed for a rare Sunday in the Christian year—the twenty-seventh Sunday after Trinity, which occurs only when Easter has been very early—is one of the most striking, masterly and immediately appealing of all Bach's works in this form. A part of it has been familiar to many people without their knowing it, as the fourth section was one of the six cantata movements the composer transcribed for organ and had published in the Schuebler collection. Thus the stanza *Zion hoert die Waechter singen* became one of the best known of the chorale preludes. It is a real thrill to hear it again in its original form, its full meaning revealed by the words. The text of the cantata, of course, is based on the parable of the wise and the foolish virgins. According to Parry the obbligato melody in this most familiar movement represents the dancing of the daughters of Zion as the Bridegroom approaches.

However, the cantata contains other rich experiences. The elaborate opening chorus and the final simple four-square chorale are wonderful things of their contrasting kinds. Also there are characteristic solos.

The performance here is up to the best in Shaw's two previous Bach sets. The singing of the Chorale is vigorous and vital, and the orchestra is an excellent one. Again Paul Matthen shows a fine grasp of the essential style, and his voice has a pleasing richness and solidity. Miss Freil is satisfactory in the soprano music, but the tenor recitative is rather tentatively done by Mr. Russell. Mechanically the set is good. No one with a fondness for Bach is going to want to pass it up.

—P.L.M.

FRENCH OPERATIC ARIAS: *La Servante maîtresse*—*Air de Zerbina* (Pergolesi); *Rose et Colas*—*La sagesse est un trésor* (Monsigny); *Zémire et Azor*—*Rose chérie* (Grétry); *Les Oies de Frère Philippe*—*Je sais attacher des rubans* (Dourien); *Le Déserteur*—*Adieu, chère Louise* (Monsigny); *Le tableau parlant*—*Vous étiez, ce que vous n'êtes plus* (Grétry); Maggie Teyte (soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra, con-

ducted by Jean Paul Morel. Victor 10-inch set 1169, price \$3.25.

▲In her long recording career, Miss Teyte has seldom been more persuasive in her artistry than in Monsigny's *Adieu, chère Louise* and Grétry's *Rose chérie*. The former recalls her exquisite singing of Berlioz's *L'Absence* and reveals her uncanny gift to make sentiment affecting but not cloying. In all of these charming 18th-century arias, she proves herself an unrivaled interpreter of French chanson. Her singing is consistently pleasing, although there is evidence that some of her former vocal flexibility no longer prevails, and as in the concert hall she seeks to conceal this with a bit of coquetry or dramatization of text. It will be recalled by those who read the interview with Miss Teyte, which appeared in our November 1945 issue, that she had previously planned to do this album of 18th-century operatic arias with the late Leslie Howard in England. Inability to find another conductor who was equally satisfactory postponed her work. Miss Teyte could hardly have found a more sympathetic and cooperative orchestral director than Mr. Morel, and one hopes that Victor will unite them again for a similar venture.

During the war years in England, Miss Teyte made a series of recordings which Victor would do well to reissue in an album. The recording of the present set is pleasantly realistic.

—P.H.R.

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LOVE SONGS: *A Dream* (Bartlett); *Auf Wiedersehn!* from *The Blue Paradise* (Romburg); *Lonesome—That's All* (Bradley); *A Little Love, A Little Kiss* (Silésu); *To the Land of my Own Romance* (Herbert); *My Dream Girl* (Herbert); *Kathleen Mavourneen* (Crouch); *I'll Take Thee Home Again, Kathleen* (Westendorf); Donald Dame (tenor) with Russ Cass and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch set P-172, price \$3.00.

▲ Radio has set a precedent for orchestral embellishments in familiar songs and it may be that Mr. Dame, who is a popular singer on the air, has used these arrangements in his programs. They seem rather pretentious to me, and Mr. Dame sings these selections in a corresponding manner with sentimental emphasis. The recording is good. —J.N.

PONCHIELLI: *La Gioconda—Cielo e mar*; and MEYERBEER: *L'Africana—O paradiiso*; Richard Tucker (tenor) with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, conducted by Emil Cooper. Columbia disc 72399-D, price \$1.25.

▲ Mr. Tucker, who will be heard as Rudolfo in Columbia's second complete opera recording to be made at the Metropolitan, possesses a sizeable voice which is appealing. His Italian diction is good, but he does not as yet employ it with the conviction of the native. His singing reveals artistic caution rather than spontaneity, which at this early point in his career is commendable.

I prefer the tenor's delivery of *Cielo e mar* to *O paradiiso*. The latter is taken at a rather slow and deliberate pace and is lacking in essential fervor. It is greatly overshadowed by the recent Jan Peerce recording. However, despite the keen competition of more seasoned artists like Bjoerling, Peerce and Gigli, this young tenor merits our applause. —J.N.

THOMAS: *Mignon—Légères hirondelles*; and PONCHIELLI: *La Gioconda—Bella cosi, madonna*; Risë Stevens (mezzo-soprano) and Ezio Pinza (basso), with the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, conducted by Fausto Cleva. Columbia disc 72371-D, price \$1.25.

▲ The *Swallow Duet* will be familiar to most. It occurs near the end of Act I when the

minstrel Lothorio comes to Mignon to bid her farewell, saying he must follow the swallows southward. Pinza is a sympathetic Lothorio and Miss Stevens is a competent Mignon, but neither of these modern singers quite capture the full charm and spirit of this music as Farrar and Journet did, nor do they efface memories of Vallin and Lafont.

The duet from *Gioconda* occurs at the opening of Act III after Alvise's aria in which he decides to kill his wife. She enters and he accuses her of infidelity and tells her she is to die. This is a melodramatic scene which asks for more emotional intensity than Miss Stevens summons. It is Pinza who gives the most convincing characterization and does the finest singing. Miss Stevens' voice is frequently unsteady. The recording, made on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera House, is good. —J.N.

SCHUBERT: *Ave Maria; Aufenthalt*; sung by Marian Anderson (contralto) with Franz Rupp at the piano. Victor disc 11-9836, price \$1.00.

▲ Gradually Miss Anderson seems to be redoing the most popular numbers in her recorded repertoire. In the case of the present songs there is more reason for doing so than in that of *Der Tod und das Mädchen* which reappeared recently. Her older recording of the Schubert *Ave Maria* was a *tour de force*, for with her phenomenal breath control she was able to draw the phrases out to greater length than practically any other singer; on a twelve-inch disc this necessitated the omission of all the solo bits in the piano part. For her new recording she adopts a less ponderous tempo, which seems to me better quite aside from the welcome restoration of prelude, interlude and postlude. Something similar happens in *Aufenthalt*, to considerable gain in dramatic force. The recording, it hardly needs saying, is fuller in the new version, and the balance with the piano much better. But—and this unhappily is a big but—the voice is no longer either so rich nor so steady as it was. —P.M.L.

SCHUBERT: *Dem Unendlichen, and Serenade*; Lauritz Melchior (tenor) with Ignace Strasfogel at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17509-D, price \$1.00.

▲ Apparently to solace those who disliked his Hollywood version, Melchior made this recording of the Schubert *Serenade*. In this record he sings in a more subdued manner, with no real body of tone and in baritone key. *To the Infinite*, is "a big song for a big voice", in praise of the everlasting God, the Creator of Nature. Beginning with a declamatory recitative, the song has definitely a dramatic character. I wish I could report that Melchior sings these satisfactorily, especially the latter which has been unavailable since the fine performance of Schlusnus on Polydor. In neither song is the tenor heard at his best.

—J.N.

SONGS YOU LOVE: *I'm Falling in Love with Someone* and *Ahl Sweet Mystery of Life* from *Naughty Marietta* (Herbert); *Yours Is my Heart Alone* (Lehar); *Sylvia* (Speaks); *Trees* (Rsabach); *Always* (Berlin); *Jonah and the Whale* (Arr. MacGimsey); *Down To De Rivah* (arr. MacGimsey); Robert Merrill (Baritone) with Russ Case and his Orchestra. Victor 10-inch set M-1150, four discs, price \$3.85.

▲ Mr. Merrill sings these familiar songs with admirable artistic simplicity and with appealing tone. Case gives him good support, but some of the orchestral arrangements are a bit fussy. The recording effects a good balance between singer and the instrumental ensemble.

—J.N.

TCHAIKOVSKY: *Pique Dame*—*Liza's Aria*; *It Was Early Spring*, Op. 38, No. 2; *Where Dancing Was Loudest*, Op. 38, No. 3; *Green Grass*, Op. 47, No. 7; *I Wish*, Op. 38, No. 4; *In This Moonlight Night*, Op. 73, No. 3; *Don't Doubt Me Dear*; *None But the Lonely Heart*, Op. 6, No. 6; *Whether By Day*, Op. 47, No. 6; *Irra Petina* (soprano) (in Russian), with Orchestra conducted by Walter Hendl. Columbia set MM-712, three discs, price \$4.60.

▲ It would have been preferable had the singer omitted the *Pique Dame* aria and given another song with piano accompaniment rather than these orchestral arrangements. Some of the intimacy and attractiveness of Tchaikovsky's melodies are lost. The orchestra detracts at times the charm of the singer's utterance. Her voice is not large and she is limited in perception and dramatic

intensity. In the renditions of *Where Dancing Was Loudest* (more failingly known as *At the Ball*) and *None But the Lonely Heart*, the orchestral arrangements are more intrusive than I like. When Maria Kurenko recorded these songs the singer's artistry was more keenly felt and appropriately mated to the keyboard. Miss Petina, however, is to be commended for selecting a group of six songs which have never, to my knowledge, been previously recorded. One of these, *Green Grass*, is among the composer's finest, and *Whether By Day* owns a lifting charm which the singer nicely realizes. I am sure many will find pleasure in this album, for Tchaikovsky's songs are all emotionally appealing and reveal his striking gift as a lyricist. Mr. Hendl provides satisfactory accompaniments and the recording is pleasingly natural in sound.

—J.N.

VERDI: *Otello*—*Canzone del Salce*, and *Ave Maria*; Licia Albanese (soprano) with RCA Victor Orchestra, conducted by Frieder Weissmann. Victor disc 11-9957, price \$1.00.

▲ A San Francisco reader writes of Albanese's first appearance in the role of Desdemona: "Hers is a performance incomparable in its subtlety and subdued sincerity. Instead of the great dramatic sweep some impart to this character, Albanese concentrates on human warmth and simplicity. In the last act, her acting, singing, and whole expression combines to produce an unforgettable performance." In these recordings

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much that our correspondent has said is substantiated. With this singer, the text is an important element in her art and she points it up wisely for dramatic effects—indeed, in a manner which conveys her acting ability.

Mr. Weissmann turns in his usual competent orchestral accompaniment, which at times tends to submerge the singer's voice. This lends a realistic character to the reproduction—reminiscent of the opera house—which many will welcome. It lends a particularly impressive effect to the *Ave Maria*.

—J.N.

Collector's Releases

GIORDANO: *Fedora*—*Amor ti vieta*; and *Siberia*—*T' incontra per via*; Amadio Bassi (tenor). CRS 10-inch disc 29. Also IRCC 10-inch disc 3016.

PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut*—*Ah Manon mi tradisce*; and LEONCAVALLO: *I Pagliacci*—*Vesti la giubba*; Edoardo di Giovanni (tenor). CRS 10-inch disc 22. BELLINI: *I Puritani*—*Vieni fra queste braccia*; and VERDI: *Il Trovatore*—*Di quella pira*; Hipolito Lazaro (tenor). CRS 10-inch disc 18.

PUCCINI: *La Tosca*—*Ha più forte saper* and *Gia, mi dicono venal*; Riccardo Stracciari (baritone). CRS 10-inch disc 19.

VERDI: *Ernani*—*O dei verd' anni miei*, and *La vedremo, o veglio audace*; Riccardo Stracciari (baritone). CRS 10-inch disc 20.

FLOTOW: *Marta*—*Brindisi*; and GOUNOD: *Faust*—*Serenata*; Vittorio Arimondi (bass). CRS 10-inch disc 27.

BIZET: *Carmen*—*Habanera*, and *Kartellied*; Karin Branzell (contralto). CRS 10-inch disc 23.

WAGNER: *Die Walkure*—*Ho-yo-to-ho*, and *Du bist der Lenz*; Olive Fremstad (soprano). CRS 10-inch disc 21.

CILEA: *Adriana Lecouvreur*—*Io son l' umile ancella*; Salomea Krusceniski (soprano). CRS 10-inch disc 25.

VERDI: *Otello*—*A terra! Si nel livido fango*, and *Salce*; Eugenia Burzio (soprano). CRS 10-inch disc 26. All CRS

discs are \$2.00 each. The IRCC disc is \$1.75.

▲The above list of old acoustic records are part of a historical series sponsored by Mr. Jack L. Caidin of the Collector's Record Shop. All are dubbings from old discs. The process of re-recording presents many technical problems and the finished product is seldom as good as the original. The often brittle material of old records causes varying difficulties which may make for some distortion in a dubbing. Those who have old machines or equipment of moderate range will find the reproduction best. On modern, extended-range sets any distortion is accentuated and this sometimes makes for an unnatural vibrato in the voice.

Both CRS and IRCC elected to re-issue the same two selections (made in 1906) by the famous Italian tenor, Amadeo Bassi, who was born in 1874. Of the two discs, the IRCC offers better reproduction. Bassi was a distinguished lyric tenor who was equally successful in the lighter dramatic roles. He was the Gennaro in the first performance of *The Jewels of the Madonna* which I heard given by the Chicago-Philadelphia Grand Opera Co. These selections, made when the tenor was in his thirty-first year, are fine examples of his artistry despite a not too pleasant piano background.

In Italy Edward Johnson was known as Edoardo di Giovanni. The present selections, made in 1918 and 1922, offer examples of his voice in its prime. Always a stylist, Johnson's artistry is admirably projected in both cases.

The Spanish tenor, Lazaro, who sang at the Metropolitan for a number of years after the first World War, gloried in his high tones which both these selections exploit. The *Puritani* aria has a high D and the *Trovatore* several high C's. Lazaro unquestionably possessed a phenomenal tenor voice but he lacked style and his singing was often beset with vibrato. His faults are apparent in both these selections—the high D is not without strain and much of his singing wavers in tone. The tenor made these selections in 1915 and 1917.

Stracciari was one of the great baritones of this century. He seldom made a poor record. His Scarpia was an impelling characterization, less polished than Scotti's but more vibrant as these two arias (made in

1915 and 1917) prove. In both the *Tosca* and *Ernani* selections the singer's strong histrionic sense is noted. His high tones are genuinely thrilling, but I question the one at the end of *O dei verd' anni miei*. If memory serves me rightly it is an interpolation. The other *Ernani* is the baritone part of a duet including a bass. Stracciari's rendition is a vibrant voiced rival to Battistini's famous recording, made with the basso Sillich.

Adamo Didur (1874-1946), whom I often heard in the old days at the Metropolitan, was a great operatic artist. These recordings, made in 1905 and 1907, reveal his rich, plangent basso at its best and also his acting abilities.

In Italy, old-timers speak with reverence of the singing of Vittorio Arimondi (1861-1928). He possessed a smooth vocal style and at times his lyrical singing recalls Plancon. The present records, made in 1907, are good examples of this gifted artist.

Although it was a commendable procedure to reissue some records made by the distinguished contralto, Karen Branzell, I do not think that the music of *Carmen* is heard to advantage in the German language. Certainly, the *Habanera* permits little subtlety. However, these selections, made in 1919 and 1923, are appreciable for the singer's artistic intelligence.

None of Fremstad's records really reveal her greatness as an interpretative artist. The present selections, made originally for Columbia in 1913, are not too successfully re-recorded. Her rendition of the *Battle Cry*, with the ineffectual orchestra background, seems a bit feeble, but her *Du bist der Lenz* is appealing and projects some idea of her vocal sweetness and expressive qualities.

Salomea Krusceniski (born in 1872 in Poland) sang for many years with great success in Italy. Hers was an exceptionally beautiful voice, which she was able to modulate in a most appealing manner as these selections from an inconsequential Italian opera prove. Apparently she relied on the beauty of her voice to win her approval for stylistically she was not without faults as her scoping and unintelligible diction reveal.

Eugenio Burzio (1872-1922) was a much finer singer than these recordings convey. Made with a feeble piano accompaniment in 1908 and 1909, these are not among her best phonographic offerings. The first aria, sung

in Act III sung by Desdemona after Otello has thrown her to the floor, is hardly a selection to render with a tinny piano background. The voice sounds thin and edgy. Apparently Burzio's voice grew in quality and strength, for when I heard her in 1921 she possessed a dramatic vibrancy and sensuous appeal that recalled Emmy Destinn. The considerably cut-up version of the *Wil-*

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AUCTION—my collection of instrumental recordings, mostly cut-out prewar items and some imports. Lists on request. John Lyko, 5226 W. 24 St., Cicero 50, Ill.

WANTED: Louis Graveure (tenor) records; Polydors, Ultraphones, Telefunkens, etc. VOCAL OPERATIVES for Sale. Mail Want List. Jos. Jordan Jacobs, 30 East 208 St., New York 67, N.Y.

WANTED: Victor sets 129, 163, 171 (Virtuoso Quartet), 235, 402. Columbia sets 155, 189, 285. Bruckner Quintet, HMV. WILL EXCHANGE: Villa-Lobos—Bachianas Brasileiras Nos. 2 and 3, works by Heitor Travares, Caballero's Duo de la Africana, Bruckner—E minor Mass on Telefunken, Rossigni's Feste Romane, Bach Musical Offering, Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata conducted by Weingartner, etc.—Thomas L. Clear, 64 Kensington Rd., Bronxville, New York.

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low Song offers some better singing but hardly as impressive as can be heard in some of the later recordings the soprano made for Columbia. I hope that Mr. Caidin will investigate other discs by Burzio. The re-recording suggests poor originals. —P.H.R.

In The Popular Vein

By Enzo Archetti

Suit'n Swing (Peer Gynt); Henri René and His Orchestra. Victor Album P-190, 4-10" discs. ● It's a little difficult to imagine why anyone should want *Peer Gynt* arranged when the original is so easy to take. But here it is — both suites complete — tricked out in modern dance or rhythm arrangements, some definitely imitative of various famous band leaders' styles or arrangements. René really did a slick job of arranging and Grieg himself might have gotten a chuckle or two over some of the things that happen to his tunes. And the recording is excellent. This album might also serve as a quiz program to entertain your friends. Guess-whose style René is imitating in *Anitra's Dance*, or whose instrumental technique is being aped at various points, or whose arrangements are being imitated in *In the Hall of the Mountain King*. It might be good fun, then again it might not be.

Dorothy Shay Goes To Town; Dorothy Shay, The Park Avenue Hillbilly, with Orchestra under the direction of Mischa Russell. Columbia Album C-155, 4-10" discs.

● For her second album, Dorothy Shay brings her hillbilly subjects to town. Her sly, double-entente songs are delightful. Grand fun! The accompaniments and recording are excellent.

Torch Songs; Columbia Album D-1, 2-10" discs. *Fool That I Am and How Soon;* Columbia 37952. Dinah Shore, with Orchestra under the direction of Sonny Burke.

● Torch songs are closely identified with Dinah Shore. She has the voice and style for them. She is especially good in *Bill, When A Woman Loves A Man*, and *Tess' Torch Song* from *Up In Arms* but not as successful in *St. Louis Blues*. This lament requires an earthiness which Dinah's polished manner doesn't quite encompass. The single disc is more or less in the same vein, though, as music, it doesn't quite match what's in the album.

I Still Get Jealous and Papa, Won't You Dance With Me? Victor 20-2469. *That Old Gang of Mine and Sleepy Time Gal;* Victor 20-2513. The Three Suns.

● The now familiar Three Suns style is used effectively in these numbers, especially *Sleepy Time Gal*. In the first disc, they are joined by The Sun Maids.

Cornbread, 'lasses and Sassafras Tea and My Adobe Hacienda; Victor 20-2378. *Near You and When You Were Sweet Sixteen;* Victor 20-2502. *Ole Buttermilk Sky and Take Them Cold Feet Outa My Back;* Victor 20-2309. Lonzo and Oscar, with Their Winston County Pea Pickers.

● Hillbilly stuff with a comedy touch supplied by two new entertainers in the field. They are going places! *Pop Corn Sack and Our Hour;* Spike Jones and His City Slickers. Victor 20-2375.

● Not up to the best Spike has done but nonetheless whacky fun.

Peggy O'Neill and Waltz In A Flat (Brahms); The Polka Dots. Musicraft 507.

● This group is a harmonica band with a rather interesting style. The Brahms falls flat but *Peggy O'Neill* is good. Try it!

Diminuendo In Blue and Jam-a-Ditty; Duke Ellington and His Orchestra. Musicraft 511.

● This *Jam-a-Ditty* is not a repressing of disc 466 from the Musicraft Album S-6: *Duke Ellington At Carnegie Hall*. It is a pressing from the first master made at that recording session. The record in the album is from a second master. They are hardly distinguishable apart. Both are first rate Ellington, featuring the superb playing of Jimmy Hamilton, clarinet, Taft Jordan, trumpet, Harry Carney, baritone sax, and Lawrence Brown, trombone, as a quartet.

The reverse, a new and exciting version of *Diminuendo*, stems from *Reminiscing In Tempo* in which Ellington began to experiment with new tone combinations. It is a much more mature piece than the early *Reminiscing* and in this new version, it has been polished up a bit. Good recording.

The Freedom Train; Johnny Mercer, Benny Goodman, Peggy Lee, Margaret Whiting, The Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. *God Bless America;* Margaret Whiting and The Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol 15003. *God Bless America and Bless This House;* Kate Smith, with Orchestra conducted by Jack Miller. MGM 30025.

● These discs can properly be grouped because they are records with a message. Both are done with enthusiasm. *God Bless America* has become associated with Kate Smith like the *Star Spangled Banner* is associated with Lucy Monroe and here she sings it in her usual stentorian manner. Margaret Whiting's is a bit more reserved and tastefully done. *Bless This House* is fervent, in the best Kate Smith style. *The Freedom Train* is second-rate Irving Berlin and only the array of artists saves this disc from being a bore. The recording, in both instances, is excellent.

Musical Comedy Favorites; André Kostelanetz and His Orchestra. Columbia Album M430, 4-10" discs.

● Elaborately done, as usual, in the Kostelanetz manner, but enjoyable, never-the-less. Eight different shows and seven different composers are represented. I found Porter's *Begin the Beguine* and Kern's *All the Things You Are* a shade better than the rest. The recording is excellent.

Campus Classics; Capitol Album BD58, 4-10" discs.

● This album is the result of a canvass of various colleges. All eight sides are by different artists and all the numbers were recorded by them by special request. Johnny Mercer and the Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and his orchestra do *School Days*, a mildly amusing version with a new twist. *Could-Ja* by the King Cole Trio is in their best style and Ella Mae Morse and her Boogie Woogie Seven do a rousing good job of boogying with *A Little Further Down the Road A Piece*. Stan Kenton's *The Spider and the Fly* is a rather more ambitious bit of tone painting but expertly done. Benny Goodman's Quintet does a bang-up job with *I Know That You Know* — the best number in the album. *Mean To Me* sung by Matt Dennis with Paul Weston and his orchestra is only so-so and the Pied Pipers' version of the *Whiffenpoof Song* is anemic. The Dinning Sisters do a not too exciting version of *I Get the Blues When It Rains*. None of the eight sides has ever been released before. Good recording.

Ballerina and What Are You Doing New Year's Eve; Mel Tormé, with orchestra. Musicraft 15116.

● *Ballerina* is a hit of the moment but I can't get excited over the way Mel Tormé does it. The reverse is a Frank Loesser piece which isn't on a par with other works of this talented writer. Recording is good.

Sweet and Low; The Charioteers, with Orchestra under the direction of Mitchell Ayres. Columbia Album C-156, 4-10" discs.

● The Charioteers at their best. The set contains *Sweet Lorraine*, *Sleepy Time Gal*, *My Fate Is In Your Hands*, *On the Sunny Side of the Street*, *If I Could Be With You, I Can't Get Started* and *Sweet Marie*. On the second record face, the label says the Charioteers sing *I'm In the Mood For Love* but your ears will tell you differently. It is an all orchestral disc by some other group I can't identify. Check this side when you buy your set. An easy way to do this is to match matrix numbers. The recording is first rate. Mitchell Ayres should get a share of the credit for the success of this album.

Here Comes the Band! The Louis Castellucci Military Band. Capitol Album BD52, 4-10" discs.

● A stirring and well varied selection. Sousa is represented with four marches: *El Capitan*, *Semper Fidelis*, *Washington Post*, and *Stars and Stripes Forever*. The other four sides are: *Parade of the Wooden Soldiers* (Jessel), *French National Défilé March* (Planquette), *Lights Out* (McCoy) and *Anchors Aweigh* (Zimmerman-Miles). The band is excellent but the recording is not up to Capitol's best.

Harpist's Holiday; Robert Maxwell, with Rhythm Accompaniment. Columbia Album C-149, 4-10" discs.

● A harpist with a prodigious technique and an unprejudiced taste. Popular music is represented with a Jerome Kern medley, *Night and Day*, *Fantasy On Chopsticks*, and *Harping On A Harp* — an original Maxwell composition. Classic and salon music are represented with Liszt's *Second Hungarian Rhapsody*, Debussy's *Clair de lune*, and Freire's *Ay, Ay, Ay*. Only three sides have rhythm accompaniment: the others are solos. For the popular pieces, it is a novelty to hear a harp instead of an orchestra. A delightful album — not too heavy, not too light!

Whistling For You; Fred Lowery, with guitar and Novachord accompaniment. Vocal in *Song of the Islands* by Dorothy Rae. Columbia Album C-148, 4-10" discs.

● Expert whistling but rather a big dose to take at one sitting. *La Golondrina* and *Caprice viennois* sound best of all but *La Paloma*, *Song of the Islands*, *Star Dust*, *Old Folks At Home*, *Song of India* and *Trees* are enjoyable. Certainly a program out of the ordinary. To one who can't whistle a peep, Fred Lowery's ability sounds marvelous. The recording is first rate.

Let's Put Out the Lights; Jane Russell, with Orchestra under the direction of Lou Bring. Columbia Album C-157, 4-10" discs.

● Briefly and to the point — this album is a deplorable waste of good material and recording skill.

Allegro; sung by Members of the Original Cast, including Annamarie Dickey, John Conte, Lisa Kirk, John Battles, Kathryn Lee, William Ching, Muriel O'Malley, Roberta Jonay, Gloria Wills, Robert Reeves, Patricia Bybell, Julia Humphries, Sylvia Carlton, the Allegro Singing Ensemble, and with the Allegro Orchestra conducted by Salvatore Dell' Isola. Victor Album K-11, 5-10" discs.

● Victor has stolen a march on all the other leading recording companies by bringing out the first album of selections from the new and original Broadway hit with the original cast and orchestra.

The honors are so well divided that it would be unfair to single out any one artist for special praise. Suffice it to say that the presentation is splendidly sung, played, and recorded.

The Le Fevre Trio and Big Jim Waits; Bibletone Album LF, 3-10" discs. *Onward, Christian Soldiers*; Star Lake Band and Chorus. Irene Watson, soloist. Bibletone Album Y, 4-10" discs.

● Bibletone is a company which is devoting its efforts exclusively to producing religious recordings of popular appeal. The Le Fevre Trio is a group of singers and instrumentalists, who, with Big Jim Waits, bass, are favorites throughout the South for their novel arrangements of Gospel hymns. There is nothing stuffy or sanctimonious about their presentations. They have spirit, rhythm, pep, and originality. What they sing and play could rightfully be called "White spirituals." The appropriateness of that description is demonstrated by contrasting the medley of favorite spirituals (Negro), which they sing on one disc, with the five hymns (White) on the other discs. Listening to this album is an experience and a revelation.

The other album is subtitled "A Band Concert." Actually, there are only three band selections: *Star Lake March* (Eric Ball), *Gladsome Morn* (Ray Allen), and *Victors Acclaimed* (Lt. Col. Bramwell Coles). The remainder of the album consists of *Meditation* (Alstone) and *March Gladness* (Capt. Bernard Dittmer), played by a Brass Ensemble and a Brass Sextet: *The World So Deceiving* (H. J. French) and *Except I Am Moved With Compassion* (Holz) sung by the Star Lake Chorus with Irene Watson, contralto, as soloist.

The band consists of 50 instrumentalists whose average age is sixteen, who play at the Star Lake Musicamp in the Ramapo Mountains of New Jersey. The chorus is also composed of equally youthful members of the same camp. The soloist is a Juilliard School graduate and chief vocal instructor at the camp. The Star Lake Musicamp is under the direction of Brig. Edward Carey, Secretary for Salvation Army Youth Work in the Eastern States. The camp is a vacation spot for children sponsored by the Salvation Army.

The performances are admirable and not at all amateurish or immature. Even though the music may not be great, the purpose and sincerity are laudable.

Dinner At the Waldorf; Mischa Borr and His Waldorf-Astoria Concert Orchestra. Victor Album P-175, 4-10" discs.

● Dinner music de luxe, guaranteed not to give you dyspepsia. This program consists of *When Day Is Done* (De Sylva), *Muchachos Hermosas* (Malvessi), *Valse Etincelles* (Waldeufel), *I Love Thee* (Grieg), *Ma Curly-Headed Baby* (Clutsam), *Bandoneon Arrabalero* (Bachicha), *Tristesse* (Etude in E, Op. 10, No. 3) (Chopin), and *Minuetto* (Bolzoni) all tastefully and inoffensively arranged and performed.

Western Polkas; Tex Williams and His Western Caravan. Capitol Album AD56, 4-10" discs.

● These are not Polish polkas but American

adaptations of the dance, with a Western accent. But for pep and rhythm they can hold their own. The assortment is good. *Beer Barrel Polka*, *Cowboy Polka*, *Milkman Polka*, *Capitol Polka*, *Cow Bell Polka*, *Banjo Polka*, *Yodeling Polka*, and *Big Bass Polka*. Tex Williams and his group impressed me more with their playing here than in any of their previous discs. Capitol has backed them with excellent recording.

Margie and If You Knew Susie; Eddie Cantor, with Orchestra under the direction of Jerry Joyce. Columbia.

● This is Number 2 in Columbia's Archives Series. It's a repressing of a Cantor disc which helped to make him famous and, in turn, made the songs hits. The irrepressible, enthusiastic Eddie Cantor is all there. The disc shows its age but Cantor and the songs are young.

Records 1947

(Continued from page 144)

December 1947

MENDELSSOHN: *Elijah*. (Columbia set 715). A merited performance of one of Mendelssohn's finest works. RAVEL: *Bolero*. Münch and Paris Cons. Orch. Decca set EDA 33. A brilliant recording which enhances a musicianly performance. ROUSSEL: *Petite Suite*, and FAURÉ: *Pavanne*. Münch and Paris Cons. Orch. Decca set EDA 37. Music of lesser import perhaps, but engaging nonetheless in repeated performances. Well played and splendidly recorded. BEETHOVEN: *Eroica Symphony*. Koussevitzky and Boston Sym. Orch. Victor set 1161. Although Koussevitzky's reading of this work is too highly personalized for our absorption, the superb quality of the recording definitely enhances the listener's enjoyment. GREGORIAN CHANT. The Monks of St. Benoit-du-Lac, Province of Quebec. This music unites the spirit of early paganism to the devotional characteristics of Christianity and removes the listener into a world of rare contemplation and peacefulness. Fine singing and good recording.

To the above, we add Andres Segovia's magnificent performance of the *Chaconne* from Bach's *Partita in D minor*, which came in too late for review in December. It is discussed elsewhere in this issue.

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WARREN

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